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LONDON AND PARIS FOR AFRICA WATCHERS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/03/2028

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SUBJECT: EU DIPLOMATS CONCERNED ABOUT SECURITY, EVACUATION,  
AND HEALTH CARE

Classified By: Ambassador Ronald K. McMullen for Reason 1.4 (d)

¶1. (C) RSO briefed European Union member country diplomats on a broad range of security issue, particularly the security situation in Eritrea. RSO expressed concern over the potential food crisis in Eritrea, the continued increase in crime associated with high unemployment, the increasing lack of food in Asmara due to economic conditions and a poor rainy season, and concerns about the stability of the Eritrean government in light of these factors. EU representatives stated this assessment matched their own. RSO spoke at the periodically held EU contingency planning meeting.

¶2. (C) EU members expressed concern over the plight of dual national Eritrean/European citizens in the event of an evacuation or drawdown. All parties agreed there were no guarantees the Eritrean government would allow any dual national Eritrean citizens to depart Eritrea in a crisis situation. The French Ambassador said the French government would be responsible for evacuating all citizens of EU countries if the situation dictates.

¶3. (C) EU members are also worried about the lack of assurances from the Eritrean government that it would provide clearances for medevac flights. The Eritrean government has never delivered on promises to provide written procedures on how to get aircraft clearances or contact information in the event an emergency happens after hours on weekends. Eritrean officials generally do not release their home or cellphone numbers and have in the past been unresponsive to appeals for emergency assistance. The EU Representatives also stated each embassy had its own "certified" local doctor they use for contract services, but are still troubled by the quality of medical care in Eritrea.

¶3. (C/NF) Post comments: The meeting reflected the growing concern within the diplomatic community over the current situation in Eritrea. Despite the French announcement that they would handle any evacuation of EU personnel, the French Ambassador has told RSO and other EmbOffs in the past that the French government has not provided assurances they would use their military to support an evacuation of French or other EU personnel should the need arise.

MCMULLEN